

6-1-1952

Profile of a Church

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Recommended Citation

I, F. "Profile of a Church." *The Palimpsest* 33 (1952), 190-192.
Available at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/palimpsest/vol33/iss6/8>

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Profile of a Church

By virtue of its plan of organization, the Evangelical and Reformed Church belongs to the world-wide Presbyterian family. The top governing body is the General Synod, meeting every three years, in connection with which there are thirty-four subordinate synods in the United States.

Locally, the congregations are organized democratically and governed representatively by the consistory or council, led by the pastor. Youth groups, women's societies, and the Churchmen's Brotherhood are features of congregational life.

Worship in the E & R communion is dignified and simply liturgical in style. Great pride is taken in the music of the church. Sanctuaries, choir stalls, altar appointments, and church buildings throughout are generally straightforward in plan and simple, not ornate, as to architectural detail.

There is something about all E & R church buildings that recalls the Old World of Reformation times, yet something denoting their complete adaptation to American usages. This indefinable something is felt as one takes it all in — from the usual pointed stained-glass windows depicting scenes from the Life of Christ, and the tall, slen-

der spire with its bell or chimes and topped by the Cross, to the efficient dining hall and kitchen, the audio-visual stage, and the adjacent parking lot. Simple beauty of structure, orderly planting of the premises, thrifty good housekeeping of the church plant, and the members' will to provide modestly but at the same time comfortably for today and for tomorrow — all evidence a devotion to the Church as society's Number One institution. Church names, too, excite an interest in the traditions of the E & R Church — the Four Evangelists (particularly, St. Luke and St. John), Zion, Peace, Salem, Immanuel, and Trinity all suggest the longing for and the certitude of religious discovery.

E & R people are loyal to their Church, to its forms and its traditions, and above all to its persistent world-wide attitude. As Americans, moreover, they are among the foremost proponents of our cherished democracy. Hence, the E & R Church is consistently as outspoken as any sister communion in favor of the complete separation of church and state in this Republic.

There is, on the whole, in the E & R Church, a fairly healthy balance of social classes. In some of the smaller Iowa congregations, of course, a largely rural flock is to be expected. A deep respect for the Christian use of Sunday, and a high regard for the pastor and his family are customary with E & R folks, who also deal frankly with the many

social problems of our time through the official boards of the E & R Church.

But theirs is a denomination especially well known and respected for its accomplishments in the field of federative action, and here the historic attitude of toleration supplies the motive. From this vantage point, therefore, the E & R Church naturally participates heartily in the work of the National Council of Churches and the World Council. Herein is a testimony to the ever-present Christian hope: "That they may be one."

FREDERICK I. KUHNS